

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 CCO-00 /026 W

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O P 151249Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

O RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 5261

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4554

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ET

SUBJECT: CISCO II

REF: A. STATE 270820 B. DAMASCUS 4538

1. IN OUR MEETING NOVEMBER 15, SHOEFI SAID THAT FOLLOWING HIS DISCUSSION OF CISCO II WITH AMBASSADOR (PARA 3, REF. A.) FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD SENT SECOND MEMORANDUM TO PRESIDENCY FOLLOWING UP ON ITS ORIGINAL MEMORANDUM AFTER OUR INITIAL DE MARCHE. BOTH MEMORANDA, SHOEFI SAID, HAD RECOMMENDED THAT PRESIDENT AUTHORIZE SYRIAN MEDIATION BUT FOREIGN MINISTRY AS YET HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY RESPONSE OR WORD REGARDING WHAT PRESIDENT HAD DECIDED TO DO. SHOEFI SAID HE COULD SEE NO OBJECTION IF WE WISHED TO CONTACT LOCAL JOURNALISTS WITH REGARD TO PASSING FAMILY MESSAGES TO CAPTIVES. HE SAID HE WOULD MAKE NOTE OF FACT THAT WE HAD RAISED THIS POSSIBILITY WITH HIM.

2. IN SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT, UPI LOCAL STRINGER OSTWANI TOLD US NOV. 15 THAT SHE HAD MET WITH PLF OFFICIAL OMAR ALEEM PREVIOUS EVENING AND ASKED HIM ABOUT PASSING MESSAGES TO CAPTIVES FROM THEIR RELATIVES IN U.S. ACCORDING TO OSTWANI, ALEEM SAID ERITREANS HAD BEEN APPROACHED SOME TIME BACK BY FINANCIAL TIMES NEWSPAPERMAN ABOUT

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EXCHANGING MESSAGES BUT CONTACTS HAD BROKEN DOWN BECAUSE

ERITREANS WERE NOT SATISFIED WITH SYRIAN INTERMEDIARY (INVOLVED (OSTWANI SAID THIS WAS LOUIS FARES AND HE HAD WANTED "COMMISSIONS"). ERITREANS HAD ALSO BEEN APPROACHED BY ICRC WITH MESSAGES FOR CAPTIVES BUT HAD REFUSED TO ACCEPT ICRC AS GO-BETWEEN. HOWEVER, ALEEM SAID HE HAD JUST RECEIVED CABLE FROM FINANCIAL TIMES REPORTER INQUIRING WHETHER ERITREANS WOULD ACCEPT MESSAGES FROM FAMILY MEMBERS. LEADERSHIP, HE SAID, WAS NOW STUDYING PROPER RESPONSE.

3. OSTWANI SAID THAT ALEEM'S OWN VIEW ON ISSUE OF PASSING MESSAGES WAS THAT ANY CONTACTS MUST BE CONDUCTED VIA GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AUTHORIZED TO MEET WITH ERITREANS, WHETHER FROM USG, SYRIAN OR SUDANESE GOVERNMENT OR ANYONE ELSE. OSTWANI STATED IT WAS HER IMPRESSION THAT ALEEM WOULD WELCOME DIRECT CONTACT WITH A USG OFFICIAL.

4. COMMENT: IT SEEMS LIKELY FROM FOREGOING: A) THAT SYRIAN GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET TAKEN DECISION REGARDING OUR REQUEST; AND B) THAT PLF, OR ALEEM AT LEAST, MAY BE TRYING TO USE QUESTION OF MESSAGE TRANSMISSION AS MEANS OF FORCING DIRECT CONTACT WITH USG. BELIEVE WE CAN OBTAIN FROM OSTWANI THE TELEPHONE NUMBERS OR OTHER MEANS OF MAKING DIRECT CONTACT WITH ABU SAADAH AND/OR ALEEM. WILL AWAIT DEPARTMENT INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE PROCEEDING FURTHER.
PELLETREAU

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